

California's Child and Family Services Review System Improvement Plan

County:	
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	
Period of Plan:	
Period of Outcomes Data:	Quarter ending:
Date Submitted:	
County Contact Person for County System Improvement Plan	
Name:	
Title:	
Address:	
Fax:	
Phone & Email:	
Submitted by each agency for the children under its care	
Submitted by:	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
Name:	
Signature:	
Submitted by:	
Submitted by:	County Chief Probation Officer
Name:	
Signature:	
CAPIT Liaison	
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Title:	
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Phone & Email:	
CBCAP Liaison	
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County PSSF Liaison		
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Phone & Email:		
In Collaboration with:		
County & Community Partners	Name	Signature
County Abuse Prevention Council		
Child Health Department		
County Mental Health Department		
Parent Representative		
Local Education Agency		
Youth		
Resource Families and other Caregivers		
Court Representative		
County Adoption Agency (or CDSS Adoptions District Office)		
Local Tribes		

☐ Names and affiliations of additional participants are attached.

**California
Child and Family Services Review**

**San Bernardino County
System Improvement Plan
2009-2012**



**Submitted by
the Department of Children's Services
and the Probation Department**

March 7, 2009

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INTRODUCTION

The San Bernardino County **2009 System Improvement Plan (SIP)** is the third component in the County's review, assessment, planning and improvement of its Child Welfare Services (CWS). This process occurs on a triennial cycle and operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement and public reporting of program outcomes. San Bernardino County is in its second cycle of this triennial process.

The lead agencies for this process are the San Bernardino County **Department of Children's Services** and the **Probation Department**. The Department of Children's Services is responsible for outcomes in all areas related to children who are receiving child welfare Title IV-B and IV-E funded services. The Probation Department is responsible for outcomes related to foster children under its direct supervision that are receiving Child Welfare Services.

This intensive examination allows the County to better understand its practices; policies and procedures; availability and effectiveness of its resources; and the nature of its service delivery. The County is able to identify strengths, barriers and challenges, and areas needing improvement. The resulting plan for making the necessary improvements is known as the System Improvement Plan (SIP). The overall focus of the SIP is a **commitment to specific measurable improvements in performance outcomes** that the County will achieve within a defined timeframe.

The SIP is developed every three years by the lead agencies in collaboration with local child abuse and neglect prevention partners, community partners, youth, parents, foster parents, guardians, adoption parents, kin-caregivers, other non-relative caregivers, group home providers, service providers, representatives of local Native American Indian Tribes, Juvenile Court, other County departments and local public agencies. Technical assistance is provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The SIP must be approved by the Children's Policy Council, the County Board of Supervisors and CDSS.

This **continuous triennial process** is mandated by **California Assembly Bill 636** (effective January 2004), which created the Child Welfare Services Outcomes and Accountability System, also known as the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). The C-CFSR requires that for each three-year period, each county will complete the **Peer Quality Case Review**, the **County Self-Assessment**, a **three-year System Improvement Plan**, and **annual updates** to the System Improvement Plan. The San Bernardino County 2009 SIP will be in place from **March 2009 through March 2012**, with annual updates to the State.

In addition to requiring **improvement of the outcomes** for children in the child welfare system, this legislation holds the CDSS and the counties **accountable for the outcomes** achieved. The purpose of this legislation is to improve the performance of the counties in order to improve the outcomes for children in care. Performance indicators have been developed to measure progress toward achieving the goals of this legislation. Those goals are:

- Protect children from abuse and neglect.
- Have children safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Provide children permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Preserve the continuity of family relationships and connections for children.
- Enhance families' capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Ensure children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Ensure children receive adequate services to meet physical and mental health needs.
- Prepare youth emancipating from foster care to transition into adulthood.

The C-CFSR requires CDSS to provide the counties with **Quarterly Outcome and Accountability County Data Reports** of key **safety, permanence and well-being** indicators. These quarterly reports provide summary level Federal and State program outcomes measures that serve as the basis for the C-CFSR and are used to track State and county performance over time. The Federal outcomes measures are defined by the Federal Child and Family Service Review, an oversight system mandated by Congress and used to monitor the performance of the states.

Building on information gathered during the 2008 Peer Quality Case Review and the 2008 County Self-Assessment the following **four Federal outcomes measures** were selected for inclusion in the 2009 SIP for improvement of County performance in its Child Welfare Services:

- **C1.3 – Reunification within 12 months (entry cohort)** - this measure computes the percentage of children reunified within 12 months of removal for a cohort of children first entering foster care.
- **C3.1 – Exits to Permanency (24 months in care)** – this measure computes the percentage of children discharged to a permanent home by the last day of the year and prior to turning 18, who had been in foster care for 24 months or longer.
- **C3.3 – In Care 3 years or longer (Emancipated/Age 18)** – this measure computes the percentage of children in foster care for 3 years or longer who were then either discharged to emancipation or turned 18 while still in care.
- **C4.3 - Placement Stability (at least 24 months in care)** – this measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements who have been in foster care for 24 months or more.

The C-CFSR also requires CDSS to provide each county with **State Technical Assistance and Monitoring**. CDSS is required to monitor the completion of all activities under the C-CFSR for each county, including: ongoing tracking of county performance measures, reviewing county self-assessments for completeness, participation in the PQCR, and review and approval of the county SIP. CDSS is required to provide guidance and technical assistance to counties during each phase of the C-CFSR process and ultimately track and report on progress toward measurable goals set by each county in its SIP.

DEFINING THE COMPONENTS

Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)

The current triennial cycle of the County's review, assessment, planning and improvement began in the fall of 2007 when the County and many community partners kicked off the **2008 Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)**. The focus of the PQCR was ***Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future***. In February and March of 2008, information was gathered during interviews and focus groups. The PQCR final report, submitted in May 2008 to the California Department of Social Services, contained the findings and recommendations of youth, social workers, Probation Officers, community partners, and collaborating agencies.

County Self-Assessment (CSA)

The next component was the more comprehensive **2008 County Self-Assessment (CSA)**. The collaborative CSA Team explored the readiness of the County to provide quality Child Welfare Services to children and families during the next three years (2008-2011). The CSA Team determined the basis for the County's current performance in order to identify and remove barriers to improving outcomes for children and families. The CSA Team also identified the strengths and weaknesses of the current array of services and the manner in which those services are provided. Four specific performance outcomes areas were chosen for improvement during the next three years. The CSA final report was submitted to CDSS in November 2008.

System Improvement Plan (SIP)

The **2009 System Improvement Plan (SIP)** is the County's commitment to make **measurable improvement** in the four chosen performance outcomes areas. The SIP contains **improvement goals** for improving measured performance in each of these outcome areas. **Strategies** define the accomplishments necessary to reach an improvement goal. **Milestones** are the steps that will be taken to accomplish a strategy. **Timeframes** are established to provide chronological order and priority to the milestones. The SIP also **assigns responsibility** for completing the milestones. The SIP Core Team, three SIP Workgroups and other collaborators began developing the SIP in November 2008.

INTEGRATION OF THE SIP AND CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF THREE-YEAR PLAN

CDSS is currently revising the C-CFSR guidelines so that counties will be required to fully integrate the elements of the Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention

(CBCAP), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Three-Year Plan into the C-CFSR process. The intent of this integration is to streamline duplicative processes, maximize resources, and increase partnership and communication. According to the CDSS All County Information Notice (ACIN) No. I-41-08, dated June 4, 2008, the integration is now effective for all counties and will be required for those counties with System Improvement Plans due on or after July 1, 2009. Beginning on that date, counties submitting the SIP will be required to integrate the planning component of the CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Plan with the SIP.

Although the San Bernardino County 2009 SIP is due March 7, 2009, the County has included the documents of the CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Three-Year Plan in this SIP. The combining of these two processes will enable the County's future planning of prevention strategies to be accomplished at the same time as the planning of strategies that impact outcomes. The 2009 SIP reflects the County's efforts to begin integrating these processes, even before the State finishes developing the guidelines for this integration.

The AB 636 assessment and improvement planning and the CAPIT/PSSF three-year planning and evaluation processes can most effectively be done in an integrated manner. To that end, the County Self-Assessment (CSA) and Self-Improvement Plan (SIP) teams fully and formally integrated their processes with the CAPIT/PSSF needs assessment and planning process for this planning cycle. The County of San Bernardino went the additional step of approving an interim Update Plan in September 2007 in order to extend the prior plan, validate current contracts and assist in this planning process realignment.

San Bernardino County utilized the 2008 AB 636 County Self-Assessment to evaluate strengths and needs of children and parents across the county and inform the planning process. Information from the Annual Update Reports was used in planning and procurement of services. Population and geographic data were used to procure services in areas of higher need and ensure fair and equitable access to services throughout the county. The County of San Bernardino completed procurement for FY2008/09 based on the fundamental principles and information contained in this Three-year plan, and information contained in the Annual CAPIT/PSSF Report.

This information led to the procurement of in-home services in addition to traditional in-office services. Priority for services is given to children and families who are, or have been, involved with the Child Welfare Services system. Emphasis is on families with children ages 0-5 and families who are self-referred and are seeking help to avoid problems that would bring them into the Child Welfare Services system. Procurement was specifically targeted for agencies that are, or affiliate with, Family Resource Centers, or their equivalent. There is no evidence that this allocation supplanted existing publicly funded programs.

Several CAPIT and PSSF contractors offer in-home visiting programs and services for children and families who may have special needs and require intensive one-on-one counseling, parenting and life skills services. In-home services help address the needs of families in rural or other outlying areas and families that may benefit most from services provided outside of a traditional office setting due to special needs.

Minority populations were served at or better than their proportion of the general population. Efforts are made during procurement to ensure that high need areas are served when obtaining providers. This would include areas of minority concentration. During monitoring, the ability to provide bilingual services is reviewed and used to determine contract compliance. Every effort is made by the County to ensure that Limited English Proficient individuals are adequately served.

The County is fully integrating its CAPIT/PSSF evaluations with its AB 636 Outcomes and Accountability System and holds all service providers accountable for their participation in a county-community partnership to improve outcomes for child safety, permanency, and family and child well being. To that end a multi-layered, comprehensive data collection and evaluation system has been implemented to track engagement, short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. That system is now in the process of being upgraded to an automated system. The County of San Bernardino has contracted with Social Solutions to implement an Efforts-To-Outcomes system that will more thoroughly, comprehensively and expeditiously capture information and produce usable reports. The Contractors have initiated use and are now implementing the new reporting system. Training and technical assistance are being provided and all users of the system meet with County of San Bernardino staff on a monthly basis to discuss implementation issues and concerns.

More information on the PSSF/CBCAP/CAPIT planning is contained in the attachments to this SIP.

NARRATIVE

Three workgroups took on the task of developing SIP goals, strategies, milestones, timeframes, and assignments of responsibilities. An additional SIP-Court Workgroup reviewed this plan and provided valuable input, particularly on the effectiveness of TDM's. This SIP-Court Workgroup was composed of Judges, Attorneys, DCS Staff, County Counsel, Court Staff, and Mediation staff. The following outline presents the goals and strategies developed by the workgroups. Further detail is contained in the planning templates section of this document.

Workgroup 1:

C1.3 Reunification within 12 months

Goal 1: Increase early engagement of parents in the reunification process.

Strategies:

- Continue implementation of Intake TDM's (Team Decision Making meetings), and expand use of TDM's for all children;
- Rollout Icebreakers to caregivers, parents, and social workers in all regions;
- Ensure that parents understand Court timelines, processes and legal rights, and have on-going support;
- Increase the immediate provision of services to parents.

Goal 2: Increase emphasis on reunification planning to facilitate early transition of children to the parents' home and support families post reunification.

Strategies:

- Increase resource parent (foster/relative caregiver) role in mentoring parents before and after reunification;
- Utilize resources for in-home treatment and support prior to and following reunification;
- Implement reunification conferencing tailored to individual family needs;
- Utilize the Comprehensive Assessment Tools (CAT) for assessment of reunification readiness and risk and safety factors.

Workgroup 2

C3.1 - Exits to Permanency (24 months in care)

C3.3 - In Care 3 years or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18)

Goal 1: Improve connections for youth to increase the likelihood of achieving permanence within given timeframe for measurable improvement.

Strategies:

- Ensure family connections are maintained;
- Increase the use of mentors to provide additional support and guidance to children and families;
- Increase support to relative caregivers, guardianship and adoptive families.

Goal 2: Increase the number of children placed in a family setting.

Strategies:

- Increase the number of County licensed foster and adoptive families;
- Facilitate movement of children from a group home or institutionalized care to the least restrictive level of care in a family setting of a County licensed home, a Foster Family Agency home, or a relative home;
- Intensify efforts to place high risk target groups (Native American and African American children) in family settings.

Goal 3: Increase the use of Family To Family interventions to build a team-based approach to permanency.

Strategies:

- Conduct an individual permanency planning team meeting every six months until the case is dismissed;
- Continue to build relationships and resources in the community.

Workgroup 3

C4.3 - Placement Stability (at least 24 months in care)

Goal 1: Increase awareness of permanency options, including the services and financial payments available through those permanency options.

Strategies:

- Provide refresher training to staff on the financial aspects and services available to caregivers and children through guardianship, KinGAP, and the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP);
 - Inform caregivers of permanency options and impact on services and payments.
- Goal 2: Develop placement matching process to improve stability of out-of-home placements.
- Strategies:
- Build capacity for resource homes in all communities;
 - Develop and maintain a placement matching database;
 - Develop and implement procedures for matching, tracking and monitoring placements; and tracking placement disruptions.
- Goal 3: Improve Probation placement stability outcome data.
- Strategies:
- Assist State in revising form SOC 158A and protocol for completing and submitting the form, including the addition of code(s) necessary to properly record a change in placement;
 - Revise Probation Department's In/Out Slip (an internal form) and related protocol for completing and submitting the In/Out Slip and the County's process for submitting the State form SOC 158A;
 - Ensure that placement is closed out for AWOL youth who have reached their 18th birthday;
 - Use State "reconciliation batches" to clean up Probation placement data;
 - Establish controls to track foster youth who AWOL, then are picked up and placed in Juvenile Hall and subsequently exit to foster care or another type of non-foster care placement.

Any necessary modifications to this three-year plan will occur at annual updates. The eventual impact of the current State fiscal crisis may necessitate funding priority changes that will affect the County's improvement plans. These changes will be reflected in the annual SIP update.

A **SIP Oversight Committee** will meet regularly during the term of this SIP. This committee will maintain ongoing monitoring of the County's progress toward meeting the goals set forth in the SIP. The committee will equally focus on the effect that progress is having on the four outcomes measures upon which the SIP is based. The resulting effects will be seen in improved outcomes for children and their families. Specifically,

- **More children** who have entered the foster care system for the first time (and have been in care for at least 8 days) **will reunify with their families within 12 months** of being removed from their homes;
- **More children** who have been in care for 2 years or more (and have not yet reached their 18th birthday) **will be discharged to a permanent home** (reunification with parents or primary caretakers, guardianship or adoption);
- **Fewer children** who have been in foster care for 3 years or longer **will be discharged to emancipation or turn 18 while still in foster care**;
- **More children** who have been in foster care for 2 years or more (from the time of removal from their homes) **will have no more than 2 placements**.

During the next three years, the Department of Children's Services and the Probation Department will continue to diligently work toward improving outcomes for children and families who receive interventions and services through the Child Welfare Services and Probation system.

County staff, community partners, caregivers, service providers, the Court and other public agencies are committed to ensure that children are protected, that families receive services to prevent child abuse and neglect, that families reunify with their children who have been removed from their homes, and that children are provided with appropriate services and permanent homes.

LOCAL PLANNING BODIES

Participants in the 2008 Peer Quality Case Review

In early 2008, the individuals listed below came together to lend their subject matter expertise and considerable efforts to the San Bernardino County 2008 Peer Quality Case Review. Some traveled from other California counties and devoted an entire week away from their families to conduct a highly successful PQCR. The County Department of Children's Services and the Probation Department sincerely appreciate the collaborative accomplishment of these participants.

Many other County staff, not named here, procured equipment and supplies; created mailings; performed data entry; served as flip chart scribes; assembled welcome packets; helped attendees sign-in; took minutes at focus groups, committee meetings and PQCR Week gatherings; or provided services that facilitated the development of the PQCR. Their contributions are acknowledged and appreciated.

- Probation Officers from Other California Counties
 - David Ruiz, Fresno County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Steven Kilby, Fresno County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Heather Schenck, Imperial County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Robert Rivera, Riverside County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Toby Aronsen, Riverside County (PQCR Interviewer)
- Social Workers from Other California Counties
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 - Brian Prieto, Orange County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Alison Gambino, Riverside County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Cary Bingham, Riverside County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Debbie Williams, Riverside County (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Emily Frost, Tuolumne County (PQCR Interviewer)
- Behavioral Health (DBH), County of San Bernardino
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 - Ismael Galarza, Transitional Age Youth Center
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 - Alejandra Flores, Educational Liaison (PQCR Interviewer)
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 - TJ Fryberger, Supervising Social Services Practitioner
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- Sheila Muir, Supervising Social Services Practitioner
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- Cyriac Mathew, Supervising Social Services Practitioner
- Karen Cohen, Supervising Social Services Practitioner
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- Shirley Brown, Office Assistant III
- Carol Johnson, Office Assistant III
- Lorraine Bigler, Office Assistant III
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- County Counsel
 - Michael Markel, Supervising Deputy County Counsel
 - Jeff Moret, Attorney
- Foster Parents
 - Marilyn Evans, Foster Parent (PQCR Interviewer)
 - Dianne Tate, Foster Parent, Making A Difference Foster Parent Association President, The California State Parents Team Member
 - Elease Clark, Inland Valley Foster Parents SB Co.
 - Patrena Delfosse, Tri-Valley Community Foster Parent Association, NFPA, Resouce Family Group
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 - Cathy Smith, ACYFS
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 - Kathy Watkins, Program Manager, Legislation and Research Unit
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 - Sandra Wakcher, Statistical Analyst, Legislation and Research Unit
 - David Harryman, Program Specialist II, Program Development Division
 - Linda Revoner, Performance and Education Resource Center
 - Stuart Young, Performance and Education Resource Center
- Indian Child and Family Services
 - Dona Gaje, Caseworker
 - Rachel Butterfield, Caseworker
- Juvenile Court
 - Honorable Marsha Slough, Presiding Judge
- Probation Department, County of San Bernardino
 - Rick Arden, Deputy Chief Probation Officer
 - Tracy Reece, Division Director
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 - Jameelah Pezant, Office Assistant III
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 - Elizabeth Rodriguez, Probation Officer II
 - Julie Schlobohm, Probation Officer II
 - Rafael Cruz, Probation Officer II
 - Shanda Jones, Probation Officer II
 - Marqueta Turner, Probation Officer II
 - Sandra Morris, Probation Officer II
 - Victoria Vahovick, Probation Officer II Jose Orrostieta, PO II

- Christopher Combs, Probation Officer II
 - Amy Newcomb, Probation Officer II
 - Barbara Hughes, Probation Corrections Officer
 - Kory Oberlies, Probation Officer III
- Regional Training Academy (Public Child Welfare Training Academy)
 - Laurel Brown, Director, Riverside PCWTA
- Service Providers
 - Clyde Stewart, Independent Living Program
 - Lisa Jeter, Boys Republic (Chino)
 - Phyliss Sunins, Queensland (SB ILP-Probation)
 - Joy Peterson, Knotts Family Agency
- Superintendent of Schools, County of San Bernardino
 - Bernadette Pinchback, Manager, Foster Youth Services (PQCR Interviewer)
- Youth
 - Roxie Findsen
 - 12 unnamed youth in Youth Focus Group
 - 10 unnamed youth contributed during at PQCR meetings
 - 4 unnamed youth contributed at California Youth Connection meeting

Participants in the 2008 County Self-Assessment

The County of San Bernardino Departments of Children's Services and Probation would like to thank the following individuals and agencies for their participation and valuable input in the County Self-Assessment process. In addition to those members of the County Self-Assessment Team listed below, there were numerous other participants in the workgroups and focus groups who made important contributions to the assessment in terms of knowledge of child welfare, cogent analysis of the outcomes and systemic factors discussed in this document, and thoughtful suggestions for improvement. The contributions of everyone involved in the County Self-Assessment are greatly appreciated.

- Behavioral Health (DBH), County of San Bernardino
 - Rosa Gomez, Deputy Director
 - Andre Bossieux, Program Manager II, Transitional Age Youth Center
 - Stephen Morales, Peer and Family Advocate, Transitional Age Youth
- Board of Supervisors, County of San Bernardino
 - Lisha Smith, Field Representative
- California Department of Social Services
 - Nina Dyba, Social Service Consultant
 - Ashley Franklin, Social Service Consultant
 - Stacey Burdue, Social Service Consultant
 - Theresa Sanchez, Social Service Consultant
- California State University San Bernardino
 - Dr. Ray Liles, Consultant
- CASA of San Bernardino County
 - Trisha Tenorio, Court Appointed Special Advocate
- Chemehuevi Indian Tribe
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- Children and Families Commission of San Bernardino County (First 5)
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- Jeff Wagner, Deputy Director
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- Beverly Green, Supervising Social Service Practitioner
- Roxie Findsen, Peer and Family Advocate
- Vanessa Moreno, Social Service Practitioner
- Amy Nelson, Supervising Social Service Practitioner
- Deborah Ragsdale, Secretary I
- Cathy Sellers, Supervising Social Service Practitioner
- Mary Anne Stoeve, Supervising Social Service Practitioner
- Kendra Sweeney, Social Worker II
- Sandra Williams, Supervising Social Service Practitioner
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- District Attorney, County of San Bernardino
 - Karen Bell, Chief Deputy District Attorney
- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
 - Paul Alvarado, Case Manager
- Human Services, County of San Bernardino
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 - Kelly Cross, Statistical Analyst, Legislation and Research Unit
 - Sandra Wakcher, Statistical Analyst, Legislation and Research Unit
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- Making a Difference Foundation
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- Parent
 - Josh Harmon, parent
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 - Holly Benton, Probation Division Director II
 - Cathy Roland, Supervising Probation Officer
 - Chris Gardner, Supervising Probation Officer
 - Victoria Vahovick, Probation Officer II
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 - Jennifer Cannady, Supervising Deputy Public Defender
- Public Employees Association
 - Natalie Harts
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 - Meaghan Ellis, Division Chief
 - Maury Manliguis, Public Health Administration
- Sheriff's Department, County of San Bernardino
 - Jon Anderson

- Quentin Holiday
- Superintendent of Schools, County of San Bernardino
 - Margaret Hill, Assistant Superintendent
 - Bernadette Pinchback, Manager, Foster Youth Services
- Superior Court for San Bernardino County
 - Honorable Marsha Slough, Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court
 - Lisa Jasso
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- Transitional Assistance Department, County of San Bernardino
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 - Gwen Gregg, District Manager
- United Way, Inland Empire
 - Gary Madden, 211 Director
- Workforce Investment Board, County of San Bernardino
 - Stephanie Soto, PIC Aide

Participants in the 2009 County System Improvement Plan

The San Bernardino County Departments of Children's Services and Probation would like to thank the following individuals for their participation and valuable input in the SIP Core Team and the SIP Workgroups. Many of the Core Team members also participated in one or more of the three SIP Workgroups (Reunification, Placement Stability, and Permanence). The County would also like to thank the many other individuals who contributed to the development of the SIP as consultants, additional subject matter experts or provided support services.

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 - Ashley Franklin, Social Service Consultant
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 - Hernaldo Sequeira, Child Welfare Services Manager
 - Nicky Hackett, Child Welfare Services Manager
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 - Honorable Wilfred J. Schneider, Jr., Judge
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FINDINGS THAT SUPPORT QUALITATIVE CHANGE

Recap of the findings of the 2008 Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)

The chosen focus area for the San Bernardino County 2008 Peer Quality Case Review was **Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future**. The goal was to capture vitally important input relative to involving youth in planning for their transition to self-sufficient adulthood.

The PQCR consisted of a review of summaries of fifty selected cases; one-hour interviews with selected social workers and probation officers; and focus groups for care providers, supervisors, group homes, youth, service providers, and Independent Living Program (ILP) coordinator/recruiters and instructors. A team of Probation Officers and Social Workers from six counties shared their practice wisdom and participated as interviewers (Fresno, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and Tuolumne). The PQCR provided an opportunity for all participants to share their perspectives regarding best practices (what works); barriers and challenges; and recommendations for change.

Summary of Practice Strengths found in the PQCR (strength-based practices of Social Workers and Probation Officers interviewed during the PQCR):

- Believing that the longer the youth has the same Social Worker or Probation Officer the greater the chances for a successful consistent relationship and successful outcomes for the youth.
- Understanding the importance of contact with the youth more frequently than just a monthly basis.
- Remaining knowledgeable of current Independent Living Program (ILP) services.
- Helping youth develop realistic plans for their future.
- Helping youth to identify at least one adult with whom the youth can establish a positive lifelong connection.
- Recognizing the support and benefit youth and families receive from Wraparound services.
- Getting creative in finding resources and volunteering to get involved in youth activities.

- Considering socio-economic and cultural issues when working with youth and families.
- Empowering youth to make decisions by giving them choices.
- Turning barriers and challenges into strengths.
- Probation Officers find the evidence-based assessment tool called COMPAS to be particularly useful.

Summary of Recommendations found in the PQCR for Improving Practices:

- Reduce the number of Probation Placement cases and increase Wraparound services offered to youth, thereby reducing the number of re-offenders.
- Train group home staff how to motivate youth and families to participate in preparing for the youth's future.
- Improve communication between Court and Probation, and between counties.
- Find and develop more counseling services, housing, transportation, employment and mentoring resources.
- Reduce the size of caseloads.
- Recruit specialized caseworkers to work with transitioning youth.
- Provide more transitional living for pregnant teens.
- Provide parenting training to teens.
- Address the youth's emotional progress towards independence.
- Begin transition preparation services at an earlier age and make youth participation in Independent Living Program services mandatory.
- Develop and implement a youth employment program to help youth find and keep a job.
- Offer training to Social Workers and Probation Officers in special needs of foster youth, such as self-esteem, run away behavior, drug/alcohol abuse, and mental health issues.
- Conduct a community resource fair for transitioning youth, social workers, and care providers.
- Develop an apprenticeship and volunteer program for youth that would give them practical experience, allow them to develop a sense of empathy for others, and give them a sense of pride that they are contributing to their communities.
- Keep supervisors aware of resources available to transitioning youth.
- Expect supervisors to be continually involved in cases involving transitioning youth.
- Place further emphasis on encouraging and supporting youth to stay in school and earn enough credits to graduate on time.

PQCR interviewees and focus group participants identified the following areas in which State assistance is needed:

- To develop specialized teen units and smaller caseloads;
- To fund ILP at an earlier age;
- To fund the development of a regional resource database;
- To use Medi-Cal to pay for braces and other medical/dental needs;
- To fund the requirement of on-going training for foster parents on how to help youth prepare for adulthood.

Recap of input from 2008 CSA Workgroups and Focus Groups

CSA Workgroups were convened around the **Seven Systemic Factors** affecting child and family services in San Bernardino County. These systemic factors are defined in federal law and used in the Federal Child and Family Services Review. The workgroups were formed to examine these factors and how they relate to practice in San Bernardino County. The workgroups also identified strengths, barriers, and suggestions for change. In addition, focus groups were held for most of the systemic factors. These Seven Systemic Factors are:

- Relevant Management Information Systems,
- Case Review System,

- Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing,
- Recruitment and Retention,
- Quality Assurance System,
- Service Array,
- Staff/Provider Training, and
- Agency Collaborations.

Focus groups listed the following barriers to collaboration that adversely affect the delivery of services to families and children:

- Time demands generated by sheer caseload size and workload often inhibited the ability to attend collaborative meetings on behalf of clients;
- Poor communication between agencies;
- Fragmentation of services;
- Territorial attitudes among some workers that seemed to be related to a feeling of “ownership” of certain cases that were, in reality, shared cases;
- Lack of respect for and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of professionals from agencies other than one’s own;
- Concerns with confidentiality that prevented the sharing of needed information;
- Laws, regulations, policies, and practices that prevented the timely sharing of information and acquisition of resources and services for unique groups such as children with special health care needs;
- Minimal level of cooperation between IRC and the other social service agencies.

Focus groups recommended the following changes and improvements in order to enhance collaboration between agencies involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation Services:

- Increase the levels of staff in agencies so more effective casework could be practiced;
- Develop more specialized units to increase the level of competence and practice skills among workers which would lead to better outcomes;
- Cross train line level workers of Probation, Department of Children’s Services, Department of Behavioral Health and law enforcement so that they better understand each others roles and professional responsibilities. This cross training might even include “ride-alongs”;
- Encourage agencies to proactively reach out to each other and engage in discussions of mutual interest;
- Update internal agency policy manuals to more accurately reflect how practice is actually being conducted;
- Develop interagency policies and procedures that would inform line social workers and supervisors how to handle cases from a systems perspective rather than an individual agency perspective, in order to improve the quality of services to the County’s children and families who are often served by more than one agency at a time.

The County and its service providers offer an extensive and diverse array of prevention and intervention services to children and families. However, the Outcomes Workgroup identified the need to make services available for families in all areas of the County. Families residing in the remote desert regions are challenged with transportation and distance issues in accessing services. The workgroup recommended co-located (one-stop) service centers where families being served by DCS and Probation could obtain a variety of services.

The workgroups recommended that the County enhance the manner in which it manages community resource information. Recommendations were made to increase the availability of this information to social workers, probation officers, and others to assist them in linking families with the needed services.

The Quality Assurance Workgroup confirmed the findings of other workgroups identifying a need to provide staff and care providers with additional training on cultural competency with particular focus on Native American cultures. Additionally, Training on poverty, substance abuse, and gangs was recommended.

The Quality Assurance Workgroup recommended that the County should focus on improving outcomes in the four areas selected for this SIP (C1.3, C3.1, C3.3, and C4.3). The workgroup determined that improvement in these measures will reflect improved outcomes for older youth in care. This focus is carried over from the County’s 2008 PQCR theme of *Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future*.

Recap of input from the 2009 SIP Foster Parent Focus Group

Foster parents met with staff from System Resources to provide their views regarding the challenges related to the selected outcome measures for Reunification, Placement Stability and Permanency. Foster parents voiced their concerns and needs, and their recommendations.

Reunification - C1.3 Reunification Within 12 Months (Entry Cohort) From Time Of Removal

Challenges:

- There is a lack of networking available for foster parents to provide an avenue of support
- Social worker and foster parent need to work together as a team
- Foster parents need a central contact in DCS to voice their concerns regarding how social worker is handling the case
- Social Workers tend to minimize problems reported by foster parents
- Foster parents have concerns that services are impeded if they complain

Recommendations:

- More effort should be made to place children in proper home at first placement; discussion with foster parent regarding child's problems prior to placement; foster parents should be made aware of criterion for SCR's
- Foster parents should provide proper counseling and environment
- DCS should hire an experienced foster parent as an advocate for foster parents
- Health and Education Passport should accompany child at time of placement; foster parents want to know about runaway tendencies, mental health issues, school expulsions, etc, at time of placement

Permanency - C3.1 Exits To Permanency (24 Months In Care) C3.3 In Care 3 Years Or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18)

Challenges:

- Lack of networking for foster parents
- Concern about loss of services/benefits with guardianship and adoption for both child and foster parent

Recommendations:

- Provide a cooperative networking process with Central Placement Unit, social workers, foster parents, ILP/Aftercare, and other service providers
- Foster parents should ensure youth take advantage of ILP and Aftercare services
- Prepare youth to emancipate; TILP needs to be focused on what youth wants, not what social worker thinks child should do
- Train foster parents and social workers in services and financial support and consequences of adopting or obtaining guardianship

Placement Stability - C4.3 Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months In Care)

Challenges:

- SCR's: social workers should be aware of rules for determining payment, at time of placement; social workers sometimes act like SCR's are "coming out of their pockets"; both social workers and foster parents have confusion around criteria for SCR's
- Foster parents need to be more fully informed prior to accepting placement regarding any behavioral problems child has already exhibited
- Wrap services and providers are sometimes inexperienced and provide minimal benefit to child and family; social worker and wrap provider should not undermine house rules, and allow child to play social worker against foster parent; all should have a clear understanding of the guidelines established in home
- Stabilize child's behavior before moving child to a permanent placement
- Some services, such as Victor Family of Services - FICS (in home therapy) need to work better with foster parents and not be a burden to them
- Social workers and foster parents should be aware of the child's social and emotional issues and needs to ensure child gets necessary treatment
- DCS should make foster parent classes available in high desert, particularly for dealing with difficult children and understanding SCR criterion

Recommendations:

- Foster parents and DCS need to create a network of cooperation
- Focus on placement in proper home capable of handling child's behavioral/emotional needs
- Utilize all resources available to support child
- Foster parents to set guidelines for child, and help them to feel accepted in the home
- Social workers need to spend quality time interacting with child and foster parent; do not be preoccupied with paperwork or documenting contacts
- DCS should recruit volunteers to help maintain continuous contact with child and foster parent; child needs at least one consistent and reliable person in their lives despite changes in placements and social workers

Other Techniques Used for Data Collection

Survey of Independent Living Program Youth:

Recently, as part of an effort to increase awareness and participation in San Bernardino County's Independent Living Program (ILP), a telephone survey of youth in out-of-home placements (e.g., relative/NREFM, county-licensed foster family home, foster family agency certified home, small family home, or group home) was conducted to identify the following:

- rate of participation in ILP activities;
- barriers to participation in ILP activities;
- employment status;
- educational settings and needs (e.g., tutoring);
- interest in learning life skills;
- preparedness for living on their own; and
- plans for life after foster care.

Two hundred thirteen youth completed the survey from a group of about 550 youth who, at the time, were in an out-of-home placement and were 16 to 19 years of age. The final results have not yet been published.

Survey of Providers (regarding service to culturally diverse populations and disabled individuals):

A recent survey of DCS contracted providers shows that most providers claim they are sufficiently staffed to serve a culturally diverse population (63.16%) and the disabled (84.21%). Contracts contain language requiring contractors to meet Federal and State standards under the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The survey also showed that most contractors do not believe the disabled are a significant portion of the population they serve. It is interesting that even though providers have served approximately 900 disabled individuals (10% of their clients) in each of the last 2 years, the providers did not see them as a significant part of their client population.

Survey of Department of Children's Services Social Work Staff (regarding service to Native American populations):

In a separate attempt to gather information about training needs, an on-line survey on issues of cultural competency was administered from 8/14/08 to 9/9/08 to 493 staff members from the Department of Children's Services (DCS). Some of the most significant results of the survey were for questions related to ICWA and Native American families. Some of the most common responses expressed the need for the following:

- Training on how to identify a child who qualifies for ICWA;
- Training and updates on new ICWA guidelines ("refresher courses");
- Training on placements of ICWA children (What factors should be considered when placing the child? How is this type of placement different from a placement for a non-ICWA child?);
- Training on the adoption process of ICWA children;
- Training on the Native American culture;
- Learning about culturally appropriate community resources and contacts for Native American families;
- Training in other matters related to local Native American Tribal populations;

- Developing stronger relationships with the tribes in San Bernardino County.

Survey of Department of Children's Services Social Work Staff (regarding service to racially and ethnically diverse populations):

A survey of DCS social work staff was conducted to assess overall understanding and sensitivity to racial and ethnic disparities. This survey resulted from a strategy contained in the 2007 Self Improvement Plan. Completed surveys were received from 336 DCS staff members, resulting in a response rate of 68%. The findings of this survey were:

- The majority (53%) of staff believes that ethnic/racial biases "sometimes" influence decisions made about foster care referrals or cases.
- The majority (57%) of staff also believes that ethnic/racial biases are "sometimes" embedded in child welfare policies, programs, or practices such that they result in unequal treatment of minority groups.
- The majority (78%) of staff believes that certain ethnic/racial groups are overrepresented in the County's child welfare system.
 - Of the staff that believes certain groups are overrepresented, more than half (57%) believe that Hispanic children are overrepresented.
 - Of the staff that believes certain groups are overrepresented, almost all (91%) believe that African-American children are overrepresented.
 - "Family in poverty" and "Substance abuse of parent" were reported by the majority of staff (68% and 66%, respectively) as reasons for the overrepresentation of African-American children in our County's child welfare system.
- Staff was almost evenly split on whether all ethnic/racial groups receive similar treatment and/or services, with 49% reporting that all ethnic/racial groups receive similar services and 51% reporting that they do not believe all groups receive similar services.
 - Of the 51% who believe services and treatment are not similar for different groups, the majority thought that African-American and Hispanic families receive different services and/or are treated differently.
- The majority of social workers reported that the following factors are problems in San Bernardino County:
 - Lack of bilingual translators;
 - Lack of bilingual or culturally sensitive counseling services;
 - Lack of bilingual or culturally sensitive legal services;
 - Lack of culturally and ethnically sensitive parenting classes;
 - Lack of culturally and ethnically diverse staff/therapists;
 - Lack of accessibility to resources for certain ethnic/racial groups.

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C1.3 Reunification Within 12 Months (Entry Cohort) From Time Of Removal

Explanation of Measure:

C1.3 This measure computes the percentage of children reunified within 12 months of removal for a cohort of children first entering foster care. The entry cohort is comprised of children entering foster care for the first time during a 6-month period. This measure contributes to the first permanency composite. The 12 month cutoff to reunification is based on the latest date of removal from the home with children in care for less than 8 days excluded. Children with a current placement of "trial home visit" are included in the count of children reunified in less than 12 months if that visit lasted at least 30 days, its start-date fell within 11 months of the latest removal date, and it was the final placement before the child was discharged from foster care to reunification. The denominator is the total number of children in the 6-month entry cohort; the numerator is the count of children in the cohort who were reunified within 12 months of removal. Discharge to reunification is defined as an exit from care to parents or primary caretaker(s) and includes the following placement episode termination reason types [CWS/CMS codes in square parentheses]: Reunified with Parent/Guardian (Court) [5439], Reunified with Parent/Guardian (Non-Court) [5440], Child Released Home [5513]. (Age 0 to 17 years.)

County's Current Performance: C1.3 - According to the January 2009 Quarterly Data Report (Quarter 2 of Year 2008 for San Bernardino County) issued by the California Department of Social Services, of the 710 children who entered the foster care system for their first time during the 6-month study period and stayed in foster care for at least 8 days, 275 were reunified with their families within 12 months of the date of removal from their families. This is a 38.7% rate of reunification. The national standard is 48.4%, giving San Bernardino County an 80% performance rate when compared to the national standard. This is a 19.5% decline in performance when compared to the previous reporting period.

Improvement Goal 1.0 Increase early engagement of parents in the reunification process.

Strategy 1.1 Continue implementation of intake TDM's (Team Decision Making meeting) and expand use of TDM's for all children.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT
<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF

Strategy Rationale Partnering with parents allows the parents to be involved in planning for the safety and placement of the child. As a Family To Family county, San Bernardino is committed to expanding the use of TDM's.

Milestone	1.1.1 Train additional TDM facilitators to meet implementation needs.	Timeframe	12 months (07/01/09-06/30/10)	Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, Annie E. Casey Foundation
	1.1.2 Encourage resource parent participation in TDM's.		02/01/09-ongoing		Regional Managers and Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	1.1.3 Implement regional TDM workgroups to address local barriers and challenges to conducting TDM's.		12 months (07/01/09-06/30/10)		Placement Resources Division, Family To Family TDM Strategies Committee

Strategy 1.2 Rollout Icebreakers to caregivers, parents and social workers in all regions.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Icebreakers involves open, face-to-face communication between caregivers to transition a child from one home to another, enhancing the possibility of early reunification. The Icebreaker engages the parent in acquainting the resource parent with the child's likes, dislikes, and things that will help the child to transition easier.		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP			
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF			
Milestone	1.2.1 Develop training materials to teach resource parents, birth parents, group home staff, Probation, Department of Behavioral Health and social workers how Icebreakers can assist in reunification efforts.	Timeframe	6 months (03/01/11-08/31/12)		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, PERC (Performance, Education, Resource Center)
	1.2.2 Provide Icebreakers information at TCBD (Taking Care of Business Day) to potential foster/adoptive resource parents, at PRIDE classes (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education), and at Association of Foster Family Agency meetings.		08/31/12-ongoing			Placement Resources Division
	1.2.3 Include Icebreakers in staff trainings and resource parent trainings.		08/31/12-ongoing			Placement Resources Division, Regional New Initiatives Supervisors
Strategy 1.3 Ensure that parents understand Court timelines, processes and legal rights and have on-going support.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Parents need to understand, early in the case planning process, the Court timeframes so that they will make efforts from the beginning to rectify the issues that caused their children to be removed.		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP			
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF			
Milestone	1.3.1 Explore possibility of developing a system of weekly support groups for parents through PSSF providers and/or the County Department of Behavioral Health (DBH).	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Assigned to	System Resources Division, Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors Committee
	1.3.2 Implement required orientation in operational regions for new parents involved in the Juvenile Court system. Orientation meeting to include Court video, parent partners, question and answer time, and referral to support groups.		6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)			System Resources Division, Regional Supervisors Committee, Community Partners, Service Providers, Regional Training Supervisors

		1.3.3 Heighten awareness of parents' and children's attorneys to services provided by the County Department of Children's Services (DCS).		02/01/09-ongoing			System Resources Division, Program Development Division
		1.3.4 Develop and provide a packet of information to clients including a glossary of terms and lists of service providers and other resources, including the County 211 system.		02/01/09-ongoing			System Resources Division, Program Development Division, Regional Supervisors Committee
Strategy 1.4 Increase the immediate provision of services to parents			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Connecting parents to appropriate services as soon as possible will improve the opportunity for the parents to reunify with their children in a shorter period of time.		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP			
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF			
Milestone	1.4.1 Provide immediate referrals to Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) providers, appropriate providers of therapy and/or drug court at initial TDM whenever possible.		Timeframe	02/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Regional Social Workers
	1.4.2 Partner Intake Social Worker with case managing (Carrier) social worker early in court process, by assigning secondary to carrier, to encourage parental participation, minimize change and facilitate relationship building with parent.			09/01/09-ongoing			Regional Social Workers, Regional Supervisors, Program Development Division
	1.4.3 Increase accessibility and availability of services to clients through continued recruitment of culturally competent service providers in all geographical regions of the County.			03/01/09-ongoing			Program Development Division, Contracted Vendor, Family To Family RTS Strategy Committee
	1.4.4 Encourage service providers to be proactive in their contact with parents in order to build supportive relationships as soon as possible and encourage parental participation.			02/01/09-ongoing			Regional Social Workers, System Resources Division, Program Development Division
	1.4.5 Continue to rollout Linkages to all regions and evaluate every case for appropriateness of Linkages, expanding use of Linkages to include Family Reunification cases.			36 months (02/01/09-01/31/12)			Linkages Supervisor and Social Worker, Regional Management

Improvement Goal 2.0 Increase emphasis on reunification planning to facilitate early transition of children to the parents’ home and support families post reunification.						
Strategy 2.1 Increase resource (foster/relative caregiver) parent role in mentoring parents before and after reunification			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Resource parents are part of the team and work in partnership with the child, family, worker, and other involved service providers. Resource parents can be recruited and trained to strengthen and maintain the bond between the children and their birth parents, act as partners with the birth parents and participate in the development and implementation of the child’s permanency plan.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.1.1 Continue to teach Family To Family (F2F) strategies to resource parents during PRIDE Training (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education)	Timeframe	03/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, Contracted Vendor
	2.1.2 Recruit resource parents willing to be mentors to other resource parents.		07/01/09-06/30/11			Foster Parent Association, Contracted Vendor, Foster Family Agencies, Family To Family RTS Strategy Committee
	2.1.3 Train resource parent mentors to teach other resource parents how to support reunification with Family To Family (F2F) strategies.		07/01/09-06/30/11			Foster Parent Association, Contracted Vendor, Foster Family Agencies, Family To Family RTS Strategy Committee
	2.1.4 Implement quarterly meetings between County licensed resource parents, Foster Family Agency resource parents, group home staff and regional new initiatives supervisors to problem solve F2F issues.		07/01/09-ongoing			Regional RTS, Countywide RTS, Regional New Initiative Supervisors
	2.1.5 Train kincare providers to provide support to parents		07/01/09-ongoing			Kinship Support Centers, Placement Resources Division
Strategy 2.2 Utilize resources for in-home treatment and support prior to and following reunification			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale There is a need to assess and if necessary, provide supportive in-home services for the safety and stability of the family.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		

Milestone	2.2.1 Utilize FGDM to plan for child's safety and support for parents to work toward reunification.	Timeframe	02/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	2.2.2 Utilize Success First, Wrap, and other intensive services for children provided by the County Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and other agencies to provide support for child in parents' care.		02/01/09-ongoing			Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
Strategy 2.3 Implement reunification conferencing tailored to individual family needs.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Reunification conferencing provides for a comprehensive approach with the parents to provide for the child's needs. This wholistic approach will also ensure that supports are in place for the parents.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.3.1 Plan a process and structure utilizing a bio-psychosocial format for assessment of the family.	Timeframe	3 years (03/01/09-02/28/12)		Assigned to	Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers, Program Development Division
	2.3.2 Implement conferencing utilizing extended family, Social Worker, Public Health Nurse, community supports, financial planning (CalWORKS), ADS provider or sponsor, review of client needs, post-reunification Family Maintenance plans and safety plans.		3 years (03/01/09-02/28/12)			Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
Strategy 2.4 Utilize the CAT (Comprehensive Assessment Tools) for assessment of reunification readiness and risk and safety factors.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale This tool will provide a best practice means to evaluate reunification readiness of the parent(s) in order to reduce risk in Child Welfare cases.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.4.1 Rollout CAT Version 2.0 to all staff.	Timeframe	3 months (02/01/09-06/30/09)		Assigned to	System Resources Division
	2.4.2 Provide updated policy and procedures to support use of the CAT.		3 months (02/01/09-06/30/09)			System Resources Division, Program Development Division
	2.4.3 Supervisors will ensure completion of CAT by social workers at all decision points in every case.		02/01/09-ongoing			Regional Supervisors

	2.4.4 At monthly conferences with individual caseworkers, Supervisors will discuss the CAT Continuing Services tool to determine reunification readiness.		02/01/09-ongoing		Regional Supervisors
Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.					
Case Review - Parents often do not understand the court process and what is ordered. Additionally, they often do not have enough time with their attorneys. In order to assist parents' understanding of the process, a court video was created. However, there were problems showing the video in a location where it could be viewed.					
Services Array – A need was identified to support and improve efforts to have a central, accurate, usable and living database of services available. As the 211 Information System is already in place, it has been suggested to upgrade the current database to include current information regarding the many services available throughout the County.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.					
Continue to teach Family To Family resource strategies to resource parents, mentors, parents and social work staff.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.					
Maintain technical assistance from Sphere Institute for the CAT Version 2.0 rollout.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.					
Increase funding to adequately support the minimum staff and client resources to meet all state and federal mandates for the provision of Child Welfare Services.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C3.1 Exits To Permanency (24 Months In Care)
C3.3 In Care 3 Years Or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18)

Explanation of Measures:

C3.1 This measure computes the percentage of children discharged to a permanent home by the last day of the year and prior to turning 18, who had been in foster care for 24 months or longer. The denominator consists of all children in foster care for 24 continuous months or longer on the first day of the year; the numerator includes those children with a placement episode termination date that occurred by the last day of the year and before the child's 18th birthday, and a placement episode termination reason coded as reunification with parents or primary caretakers, discharge to guardianship, or discharge to adoption. This measure contributes to the third permanency composite. (Age 0 to 17 years.)

C3.3 This measure computes the percentage of children in foster care for 3 years or longer who were then either discharged to emancipation or turned 18 while still in foster care. The denominator consists of all children discharged to emancipation or who turned 18 while still in foster care during the year; the numerator includes those children for whom the time from the date of the latest removal from home to the date of discharge to emancipation, or the date the child turned 18, was equal to or greater than 3 years. This measure contributes to the third permanency composite. (Age 0 to 18 years.)

County's Current Performance:

C3.1 - According to the January 2009 Quarterly Data Report (Quarter 2 of Year 2008 for San Bernardino County) issued by the California Department of Social Services, of the 1,713 children who were in the foster care system on the first day of the year and by that date had been in foster care for 24 continuous months, 443 were discharged to permanency by the last day of the year and before the child's 18th birthday. This is a 25.9% rate of exit to permanency. The national standard is 29.1%, giving San Bernardino County an 88.9% performance rate when compared to the national standard. This is a 6.9% improvement in performance over the previous reporting period.

C3.3 - According to the January 2009 Quarterly Data Report (Quarter 2 of Year 2008 for San Bernardino County) issued by the California Department of Social Services, of the 284 children who during the year were discharged to emancipation or during the year turned 18 while still in foster, 175 had been in foster care for 3 years or longer on the date they were discharged to emancipation or the date they turned 18. This is a 61.6% rate of children emancipating or turning 18 without having obtained permanence. [Note: Improvement for this measure is reflected as this rate decreases.] The national standard is 37.5%, giving San Bernardino County a 60.9% performance rate when compared to the national standard. This is a 2.9% decline in performance over the previous reporting period.

Improvement Goal 1.0 Improve connections for youth to increase the likelihood of achieving permanence within given timeframe for measurable improvement.

Strategy 1.1 Ensure family connections are maintained.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT
<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF

Strategy Rationale In order to increase the likelihood of children achieving permanence, it is important that youth are connected to individuals that provide a sense of self and a sense of relationship. This in turn, will provide alternative placement options.

Milestone 1.1.4	1.1.1 Continue to implement and conduct pilot of CPYP (California Permanency for Youth Project) in which 40 County foster youth will be tracked as they receive CPYP services.	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)	Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, CPYP Presenters, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	1.1.2 Provide regional training to selected CPYP pilot group of SSP/SSSPs on the Six Steps to Family Finding, Grief and Loss issues and Case Mining.		3 months (02/01/09-04/30/09)		Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, PERC (Performance, Education, Resource Center), CPYP Presenters
	1.1.3 Develop and provide six-step CPYP (California Permanency for Youth Project) training to all social work staff in all regions.		02/01/10-01/31/11		Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, PERC (Performance, Education, Resource Center), CPYP Presenters
	1.1.4 Initiate review of each case for possible relatives that may be in the record.		02/01/09-ongoing		Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	1.1.5 At least once every six months, Supervisors will discuss permanency at monthly case conference with their social workers utilizing a standardized form to guide the discussion.		04/01/09-ongoing		Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	1.1.6 Explore methods to properly document family connections and file in case file and CMS.		6 months (03/01/09-09/30/09)		Regional Supervisors, Program Development Department, Placement Resources Division
	1.1.7 Ensure the Paternity and Family Information Questionnaire is completed for each case file and included each time the case transfers between social workers.		02/01/09-ongoing		Regional Social Workers
	1.1.8 Continue to revise Concurrent Planning protocol and DCS Concurrent Planning Review (CPR) documents for more in-depth permanence review.		6 months (01/01/09-06/30/09)		Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, Program Development Division, CPS Managers and Supervisors, Adoption Managers and Supervisors

	1.1.9 Social Worker will be prepared at each CPR to present to CPR team in order to reassess status of relatives and parents for PPLA children (Permanent Placement Living Arrangement).		02/01/09-ongoing			Regional Social Workers
Strategy 1.2 Increase the use of mentors to provide additional support and guidance to children and families.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Mentoring will provide youth with a support system to promote positive behaviors and lessen problem behaviors in order to increase the likelihood of achieving permanence.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	1.2.1 Train staff to access and use CASA and other culturally competent community services that provide mentoring services to youth.	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Assigned to	Regional Supervisors, Regional New Initiatives Units, Program Coordinator
	1.2.2 Increase referrals to the CASA Program.		12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)			Regional Social Workers, CASA Program, Court
Strategy 1.3 Increase support to relative caregivers, guardianship and adoptive families.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Supportive services will increase the likelihoods of maintaining placements and connections for children.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	1.3.1 Refer all relative caregivers/NREFMs to a Kinship Center closest to their community.	Timeframe	02/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	1.3.2 Develop charts, guides and job aids for Social Workers to use in determining caregiver eligibility for programs and services.		6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)			Placement Resources Division, Program Development Division
	1.3.3 Train social workers, caregivers and relatives/NREFMs (Non-Related Extended Family Members) on the resources that are available to them such as Kinship Guardian Assistance Program (KinGAP), Specialized Care Rates (SCR's) and Adoption Assistance Program (AAP).		8 months (02/01/09-09/30/09)			Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors

	1.3.4 Train social workers on post-adoptive services for families through the provision of contact numbers and written material explaining the services.		8 months (02/01/09-09/30/09)		Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors
Improvement Goal 2.0 Increase the number of children placed in a family setting.					
Strategy 2.1 Increase the number of County licensed foster and adoptive families.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF	Strategy Rationale Early identification of potential resource families is critical to timely and successful adoption of a child in a permanent home.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Schedule and conduct community oriented events to recruit foster and adoptive families.	Timeframe	03/01/09-ongoing		Placement Resources Division, Contracted Vendor, Regional New Initiatives Units
	2.1.2 Conduct pilot to test the expedited applicant licensing approval process.		03/01/09 to 02/28/10		Placement Resources Division, Legislation and Research Unit
	2.1.3 Enhance the existing foster home application tracking process to determine how many applicants become licensed foster parents.		6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)		Placement Resources Division
	2.1.4 Evaluate the results of the pilot to determine if the goals of the pilot were reached.		7 months (08/01/09-02/28/10)		Placement Resources Division, Legislation and Resources Unit
Strategy 2.2 Facilitate movement of children from a group home or institutionalized care to the least restrictive level of care in a family setting of a County licensed foster home, a Foster Family Agency home, or a relative home.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF	Strategy Rationale Placing children in a family setting will increase the likelihood of achieving permanence.		
Milestone	2.2.1 Begin utilizing the concepts of Residential Based Services (RBS).	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers, RBS Presenters, Legislation and Research Unit
	2.2.2 Increase utilization of available services including Wrap and other intensive services through the County Department of Behavioral Health to support child and family in lower level placement.		02/01/09-ongoing		Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers

	2.2.3 Provide refresher training and do outreach to staff regarding utilization of available services such as Wrap.		02/01/09-ongoing			Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division
Strategy 2.3 Intensify efforts to place high risk target groups (Native American and African American children) in family settings.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Native American and African American children have been identified as high risk groups for difficulty in finding a placement in a family setting.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.3.1 Establish relationships with Tribal representatives and case managers to facilitate identification of prospective homes for Native American children.	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Assigned to	System Resources Division, Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	2.3.2 Continue capacity building in communities for prospective homes for African American children.		12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)			Placement Resources Division, Contracted Vendor, Family To Family Resource, Training and Support committee (RTS), Regional New Initiatives Supervisors
	2.3.3 Increase utilization of available services such as Wrap for high risk target groups.		02/01/09-ongoing			Regional Social Workers
Improvement Goal 3.0 Increase the use of Family To Family interventions to build a team-based approach to permanency.						
Strategy 3.1 Conduct an individual permanency planning team meeting every six months until the case is dismissed.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Conducting a meeting with the entire family will allow the social workers to assist the family in assuming responsibility for the care of their children thus increasing the likelihood of reunification or placement with a relative caregiver for permanence.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	3.1.1 Provide for a permanency planning process to include appropriate services such as Concurrent Planning Review (CPR) and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) at a minimum of every six months until the case is dismissed.	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
	3.1.2 Expand TDMs to include all children at all phases in the child welfare system.		3 years (02/01/09-01/31/12)			Placement Resources Division, Regional New Initiatives Supervisors

	3.1.3 Review Team Decision Making (TDM) protocols. Ensure that staff receives updates. Review and retrain staff as necessary.		02/01/09-ongoing			Placement Resources Division, Countywide TDM Strategy Committee, Regional New Initiatives Supervisors
	3.1.4 Participate in “Families For Life” pilot to demonstrate and evaluate the feasibility of a team-based approach to permanency.		18 months (04/01/09-09/30/10)			Placement Resources Division, Eastern Region
Strategy 3.2 Continue to build relationships and resources in the community.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Inform families of resources in their community that may meet their needs.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	3.2.1 Increase Community Partners to address the variety of needs a family may have.	Timeframe	02/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Regional Social Workers, Regional New Initiatives Supervisors
	3.2.2 Collect information on available resources.		03/01/09-ongoing			System Resources Division, Placement Resources Division
	3.2.3 Create community resource materials that can be made available to every family and utilize existing systems such as the County’s 211 system.		12 months (03/01/09-03/01/10)			System Resources Division, Placement Resources Division, Program Development Division, Regional Supervisors, Regional Social Workers
Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals. Staff/Provider Training – A need for increased training in a more comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity and sensitivity was identified during the CSA. Also identified was the need for more specific training on working with Native American tribes, the adoption process of ICWA children and learning about culturally appropriate community resources and contacts. Currently, the Regional New Initiatives Supervisors are working with the community agencies affiliated with the Tribes in order to bridge the communication between social worker staff and Tribal agencies, thereby increasing the knowledge and provision of culturally appropriate services.						
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Maintain technical assistance for the California Permanency for Youth Project. Staff and provider training on cultural diversity/sensitivity, family engagement, family finding, grief and loss issues and the services available to stabilize families.						
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. DCS is working with a number of contracted agencies and other community partners to implement the above referenced strategies, including Family To Family and the California Permanency for Youth Project.						

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

Revise relative approval requirements to enable more children to obtain permanence in a relative's home.

Expand definition of permanence (and methodology to measure exits to permanency) to include legal guardianship by non-relative caregivers.

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C4.3 Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months In Care)

Explanation of Measure:

C4.3 This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements who have been in foster care for 24 months or more. Time in care is based on the latest date of removal from the home. The denominator is the total number of children who have been in care for 24 months or more; the numerator is the count of these children with two or fewer placements. This measure contributes to the fourth permanency composite. (Age 0 to 17 years.)

County's Current Performance: C4.3 - According to the January 2009 Quarterly Data Report (Quarter 2 of Year 2008 for San Bernardino County) issued by the California Department of Social Services, of the 2,329 children who have been in the foster care system for 24 months or more, 752 have had 2 or fewer placements. This is a 32.3% rate of placement stability. The national standard is 41.8%, giving San Bernardino County a 77.2% performance rate when compared to the national standard. This is a decline in performance over the previous reporting period.

[Note: Improvement in this measure will be difficult to meet for several reasons. Appropriate placements for some children initially may be difficult to find due to psychological, emotional, and/or behavioral issues often not yet understood or documented in the early stages of placement. Some children who remain in foster care for 24 months or longer may have serious psychosocial needs. While a child is being fully assessed, multiple placements may occur in an attempt to meet the child's needs. Also, once a child has more than two placements there is no longer an opportunity to improve on this outcome, even though the most recent placement (after the initial two) may have been very lengthy and contributed to stability for that youth.]

Improvement Goal 1.0 Increase awareness of permanency options, including the services and financial payments available through those permanency options.

Strategy 1.1	Provide refresher training to staff on the financial aspects and services available to caregivers and children through guardianship, KinGAP and AAP.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale	Assigned to
			CBCAP		
Milestone		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF	Fluctuations in staff and changes in program requirements necessitate that training be continually updated and administered. This training also re-enforces the social workers role to promote caregiver support.	
	Timeframe		6 months (02/01/10-02/31/11)	Placement Resources Division, Program Development Division	
			6 months (04/01/09-10/31/09)		Regional Supervisors, Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, PERC (Performance, Education Resource Center)
			6 months (10/01/09-03/31/10)		Regional Supervisors, Regional Managers, System Resources Division, PERC (Performance, Education Resource Center)

Strategy 1.2 Inform caregivers of permanency options and impact on services and payments.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale DCS social work staff need to be able to provide information regarding permanency options and continue those discussions necessary to appropriately plan for the child’s permanency.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	1.2.1 Develop brochures.	Timeframe	6 months (04/01/09-10/31/09)		Assigned to	Program Development Division, Placement Resources Division
	1.2.2 At monthly meetings, Social Worker will provide caregivers with brochures and information regarding permanency options.		10/31/09-ongoing			Regional Social Workers
Improvement Goal 2.0 Develop placement matching process to improve stability of out-of-home placements.						
Strategy 2.1 Build capacity for resource homes in all communities			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Increasing the number of resource homes will help to increase the array of appropriate homes to choose from when matching a child to a placement.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.1.1 Continue to intensify recruitment of resource families countywide.	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, Contracted Vendor, Family To Family (F2F) – Building Community Partners Committee (BCP), Family To Family Recruitment and Training Strategies Committee (RTS)
Strategy 2.2 Develop and maintain a placement matching database.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Automation of placement matching will increase effectiveness and help to eliminate numerous placement changes. Central Placement Unit (CPU) workers will develop “expertise” or familiarity with resource parents’ skills and abilities. Capturing information on the child will allow the CPU worker to share the child’s prior behavior with the resource parents.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.2.1 Survey, collect and maintain a list of attributes for each caregiver, including abilities to care for teenagers or children with special needs.	Timeframe	04/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, Program Development Division

	2.2.2 Survey types of children referred to Central Placement Unit. Social Workers will continue to provide characteristics of the child (special needs, special behaviors, etc).		04/01/09-ongoing			Placement Resources Division, System Resources Division, Program Development Division
	2.2.3 Capture area and location of home and preference of placement location for the child.		04/01/09-ongoing			Placement Resources Division
	2.2.4 Enter and maintain data in an Excel Spreadsheet(s) to facilitate placement matching.		04/01/09-ongoing			Program Resources Division, System Resources Division
Strategy 2.3 Develop and implement procedures for matching, tracking and monitoring placements; and tracking placement disruptions.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale To support the success and stability of the placement, the caregiver needs complete knowledge of the child's behavior.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	2.3.1 Develop procedures.	Timeframe	12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)		Assigned to	Placement Resources Division, Program Development Division, System Resources Division
	2.3.2 Implement procedures.		6 months (02/01/10-07/31/10)			Placement Resources Division
Improvement Goal 3.0 Improve Probation placement stability outcome data						
Strategy 3.1 Assist the State in revising form SOC158A and protocol for completing and submitting the form, including the addition of code(s) necessary to properly record a change in placement.			<input type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Currently, form SOC158A does not contain coding necessary to capture all changes in placement status.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	3.1.1 Identify problems with Probation placement data reported by the State, such as youth in non-coded, non-foster care placements.	Timeframe	3 months (02/01/09-05/31/09)		Assigned to	Legislation and Research Unit, Probation Placement Supervisor

	3.1.2 Assist the State in identifying changes to the SOC158A that will correctly capture and code placement data.		12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)			Legislation and Research Unit, Probation Director
Strategy 3.2 Revise Probation Department’s In/Out Slip (an internal form) and related protocol for completing and submitting the In/Out Slip and the County’s process for submitting the State form SOC158A.			<input type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale Expanding the use of this internal form will provide department fiscal personnel with notice of each occurrence of a Probation child being physically moved from one placement to another. Batching and submitting the SOC158A on a flow basis (whenever there is a change in placement) will provide the State with County data in a more timely manner.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	3.2.1 Adapt the In/Out form to include instructions on the appropriate use of the form (when to use the form and which codes to use).	Timeframe	6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)		Assigned to	Probation Placement Supervisor
	3.2.2 Change the list of individual events that trigger the use of the In/Out Slip.		6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)			Probation Placement Supervisor
	3.2.3 Revise department protocol to show that Probation Fiscal Staff will complete SOC158A from information received on In/Out Slips, batch and send to State on a flow basis.		6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)			Probation Placement Supervisor, Probation Fiscal, Probation Director
	3.2.4 Review the changes to this form and related protocol with Probation Officers and fiscal staff at regular staff meetings.		12 months (02/01/09-01/31/10)			Probation Placement Supervisor
Strategy 3.3 Ensure that placement is closed out for AWOL youth who have reached their 18 th birthday.			<input type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale State listing shows youth still in placement regardless of the fact that they have reached their 18 th birthday. Closing out these placements will improve placement stability outcome data.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	3.3.1 Compare open placement lists provided by the State and County Legislation and Research Unit to identify AWOL youth who have reached their 18 th birthday.	Timeframe	02/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Probation Placement Unit, Probation Fiscal

	3.3.2 Use JNET (Juvenile Network), SOC158A Manual and other available resources to research potential problem data on the open placements lists.		02/01/09-ongoing			Probation Fiscal Clerks
	3.3.3 Probation Officers will complete and submit an In/Out Slip for each AWOL youth who has reached their 18 th birthday.		02/01/09-ongoing			Probation Officers
Strategy 3.4 Use State “reconciliation batches” to clean up Probation placement data.			<input type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale In the early part of 2009, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will begin to send out “reconciliation batches” to notify each county of potentially incorrect placement data.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		
Milestone	3.4.1 Identify reasons for data shown in the reconciliation batches, such as youth with an open placement episode, but no placement.	Timeframe	02/01/09-ongoing		Assigned to	Probation Placement Unit, Probation Fiscal
	3.4.2 Use appropriate codes on the SOC158A to correct placement data and submit to State.		02/01/10-ongoing (refer to Milestone 3.1.2)			Probation Placement Unit, Probation Fiscal
Strategy 3.5 Establish controls to track foster youth who AWOL, then are picked up and placed in Juvenile Hall and subsequently exit to foster care or another type of non-foster care placement.			<input type="checkbox"/>	CAPIT	Strategy Rationale If the youth does not return to a foster care placement, then the placement episode must be closed. Currently, CMS provides the ability to track the youth’s actual placement. However, Probation does not have access to CMS.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	CBCAP		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	PSSF		

Milestone	3.5.1 Review and enhance processing of Probation placement stability data.	Timeframe	6 months (02/01/09-07/31/09)	Assigned to	Probation Placement Supervisor
					Probation Placement Supervisor
	3.5.2 Provide ongoing monitoring to ensure appropriate processing of Probation placement stability data.		08-01/09-ongoing		
<p>Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals. Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention – A need was identified for more training of both social workers and care providers on permanency options including the availability of services, resources, and financial payments. This would assist both social workers and foster parents to focus on the best permanency option for the child.</p> <p>Case Review – Concurrent planning needs to be continuous throughout the case process which will be assisted by the revision of the Department's Concurrent Planning Review (CPR) form. When the revised CPR form is released, it will be used at monthly supervisor/social worker case conferences in order to provide a more focused identification of concurrent planning options for children.</p>					
<p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Provide training to Probation staff in the completion of the SOC158A from the information on In/Out Slips. Probation Fiscal Staff to forward the information to the State on a flow basis as opposed to monthly batches.</p>					
<p>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. DCS System Resources will assist HS/PDD, PERC and DCS/Placement Resources and judicial representatives in reviewing existing policy and procedures and trainings. Any needed changes will be identified, developed and implemented in the respective departments.</p>					
<p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. The Legislation and Research Unit will assist the State in identifying changes to the SOC158A that will correctly capture and code placement data.</p>					

ATTACHMENT I
Summary Assessment
of the
2008 County Self-Assessment

I. Summary Assessment

1. Discussion of Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement

San Bernardino County's Self-Assessment of its Child and Family Services demonstrates that the County Departments of Children's Services and Probation and the myriad of agencies and collaboratives that are part of its overall Child Welfare System, are continuing to provide quality services to the children and families in their care and that the services they provide are contributing to positive outcomes.

The County uses its Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds for an impressive number of **Countywide Prevention Activities and Strategies** which emphasize evidence based practices.

San Bernardino County is continuing to do well and moving in the right direction on the child welfare **outcome** measures of **safety** and **permanence** and has a number of best practices and other initiatives related to the **well being** of children in the care of DCS and Probation.

In addition, Probation and DCS both have impressive and sophisticated **Management Information Systems** that are constantly being upgraded and refined in order to track cases and ultimately improve services delivered to children and families in the County.

The Juvenile Court and the role it plays in the **Case Review System** is a strength for the County. Both DCS and Probation have regularly scheduled collaborative meetings with the court and related personnel. The focus groups pertaining to this systemic factor reported on a positive, collaborative working relationship between the Juvenile Court and related agencies and personnel. The Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court was mentioned repeatedly as a positive force in creating this collaborative atmosphere.

There are active **Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention** activities in the County. Foster parent licensing background checks in the County exceed State standards and in an effort to place more emphasis on foster parent recruitment, training and retention efforts, DCS has begun contracting out those services to a community-based organization so that they might be better provided in the evenings and on weekends.

The **Quality Assurance System** is a strength for San Bernardino County. The Quality Assurance Team of DCS meets regularly and its members have a sophisticated understanding of data and the inter-relatedness of data measures as they are related to child welfare outcomes in the County, and they are able to link the data to policies and practices within the County. The Quality Assurance Team enlisted the aid of additional DCS and Probation staff members as well as representatives from other agencies to examine child welfare outcomes for the purposes of this self-assessment and used the opportunity for extensive discussions related to ideas on improving service delivery.

The **Service Array** in the County is one of its outstanding strengths. The County has an incredible number and diversity of prevention and intervention services that are so numerous and complex that even experienced social work and probation staff, such as members of the Services Array workgroup, were not aware of the full gamut of services that are potentially available to children and families.

An impressive network of **Staff/Provider Training** resources is available for the training of social workers and probation officers who care for at risk children and youth in the County and other training is made available in a variety of ways to birth parents, foster parents, prospective adoptive parents, kin care providers, and other care providers.

Agency Collaboration is clearly a strength in San Bernardino County. The Children's Network, founded in 1986 by the County Board of Supervisors, actively participates in the Children's Policy Council. The Council is composed

of the major leaders in the County's child welfare programs, and is the County's official Child Abuse Prevention Council. The current focus for the County is building and supporting partnerships and collaborations towards the goal of improving services for children and families. One tangible result of this self-assessment process was an increased collaboration between DCS Staff and Probation Staff on the Team and in other workgroups, which facilitated a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, and created new working relationships between staff across two major agencies that often serve the same children and youth.

2. Strategies for the Future

Even areas evaluated as strengths can often use improvement and members of the focus groups in the Self-Assessment made important recommendations to further facilitate positive change.

One important recommendation arrived at independently by several workgroups was that the County consider adding resources to existing data bases such as the 2-1-1 system so that social workers, probation officers, and others are better able to link consumers with the services they need.

It was further suggested that the County examine the feasibility of additional services for particular groups and in particular areas. Although the County has many programs and services available, the PSSF/CAPIT services providers generally reported no difficulties in meeting their contracted service numbers even though funding levels declined. Some providers indicated that they had to turn clients away or stop accepting referrals. Thus it is very likely there are unmet services needs even in the most populated areas of the County. Even in these areas families often have difficulty getting to services because of transportation problems and other issues. The more remote areas encounter transportation and access issues due to distance and availability of public transportation systems. Increasing the availability and flexibility of services in these areas is an important priority.

One suggestion was that the County consider establishing co-located service centers where families being served by DCS and Probation could obtain a variety of services at the same place. Several Workgroups and focus groups also acknowledged the long standing issue in San Bernardino County which is that the sheer size of the county makes it difficult to provide services that are readily accessible to residents in the regions that are long distances from the major population areas.

Although San Bernardino's County's collaborative efforts are at a highly advanced level, the Agency Collaboration Workgroup recommended that agencies consider proactively reaching out to each other more frequently, that staff from multiple agencies engage in cross training exercises, and that developing interagency policies and procedures be considered in order to improve the quality of services to the County's children and families who are often served by more than one agency at a time.

The Quality Assurance Workgroup echoed suggestions made in other Workgroups that the County develop and provide additional training for staff and care providers related to cultural competency particularly concerning the Native American Tribal population. Additionally, training on the cultures of poverty, substance abuse, and gangs was recommended. The expressed need for additional training in matters related to the Native American Tribal Population was strongly echoed in the survey of social workers cited above.

Outcomes Selected for Increased Efforts

Both the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Probation Department are involved in, or directly provide programs and services that exist along a continuum of prevention and interventions that occur: before children are involved with either agency, to children who have fallen into the at-risk category, to children who come into custody or jurisdiction of the agency and court, to youth who are transitioning into adulthood after having been supervised by one or both agencies for a significant period of their lives. Each of these major child welfare agencies has, during this self-assessment process, identified two major areas that need additional focus during the next three years. The first area is services related to prevention and early intervention so that children and youth never enter the system at all or enter the system and then after a short period of intervention return safely to their parents. The second area is services related to helping children who have essentially been raised by the system transition into adulthood and develop into productive, healthy adults with meaningful emotional attachments.

DCS is involved in increased efforts at evidence based prevention with such innovative and best practices as the **SART** program and Probation, an agency long involved in prevention efforts, had a focus group during this self-

assessment process involving juvenile court personnel that recommended even further efforts by that Department, if funding could be obtained, in the prevention area.

The *Reunification within 12 months* measure (entry cohort – measure C1.3) was selected for additional attention by DCS in the future because an improvement of the outcomes on this measure should have the effect of reducing the overall numbers of youth in care as the result of maltreatment. DCS has already made clear efforts to increase the rate of reunification within 12 months (entry cohort – C1.3) through its increased use of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool, increased use of the Family 2 Family approach including Team Decision Making Meetings (TDMs), increased evidenced based PSSF/CAPIT services, and other best practice initiatives.

Building on the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) results which suggested that the child welfare system should be *Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future* and its own examination of the Outcome Measures, the Quality Assurance Workgroup recommendations to the County Self-Assessment Team were that the County should devote additional time and effort to improving outcomes on *reunification* within 12 months (measure C1.3), *placement stability* (measure C4.3), and *long term care outcomes* (measures C3.1 and 3.3). It can be expected that improvement in these measures will reflect improved outcomes for older youth in care.

DCS has already made concerted efforts to improve the outcome measures on Placement Stability (C4.3) through best practices, such as: Team Decision Making Meetings, Family Group Decision Making, family finding, relative approval units (including emergency response), use of Wraparound, increased use of Specialized Care Increments for care providers, and an Adolescent Specialized Unit. Efforts to improve long term care outcomes include many of the same programs mentioned above such as Team Decision Making meetings, increased Family Finding, Family Group Decision Making, the planned Residential Based Services pilot, Concurrent Planning Reviews, the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), and revisiting reunification with birth parents as possible permanent placements for youth.

Improving Long Term Care Outcomes (C.1) also involves helping foster youth transition to self-sufficiency and DCS envisions having its Educational Liaisons begin working with youth at younger ages; expanding the Independent Living Program and making additional use of Specialized Care Increments for care providers to assist youth in building life skills; beginning Emancipation Conferencing before age 16 and having such meetings a minimum of every six months; making additional use of the Connected 25 Initiative (CCI Program); and continuing in the development of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP); and other initiatives in an effort to help transitional age youth achieve lasting emotional relationships with caring adults and lead productive healthy lives.